

## **NRCS Conservation Planning Course Introduction and Overview**

**Agency direction** on conservation planning focuses on assisting clients in developing complete, comprehensive, conservation plans considering all of the resources (soil, water, air, plants, and animals) and the human concerns (economic and social). This course supports that direction. The course is based on current conservation planning policy, the procedures and guidelines in the National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH), the supporting technology and tools to carry out the planning process, and the locally led concept.

**The course emphasizes** the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation planning process; developing quality plans; developing plans on the entire unit; consideration of ecological, economic, and social concerns; on-site assistance; development of complete systems; the effects and impacts of planned actions on-site and off-site; and partnership involvement.

**The course is designed** to provide conservation planning training for working with individual clients or with groups that basically function as an individual. The course touches on areawide conservation planning from the standpoint of how it relates to the individual conservation plan.

**The purpose of the course** is to prepare the participant to independently apply the NRCS planning process, and to utilize supporting technology, in order to assist clients in making decisions resulting in conservation plans that protect, conserve, and enhance the resources and meet the client's needs.

**The target audience** includes NRCS employees, conservation partnership employees, and technical service providers who provide conservation planning assistance to clients. Others include supervisors of conservation planners, conservation planning support personnel, those providing oversight and evaluation, and conservation district officials. The first five modules are recommended for conservation district officials and others desiring an overview of conservation planning and the planning process.

**Prerequisites** for participants include (1) having the equivalent of one year or more experience in conservation planning with a proficiency level of 3 - Can Perform With Supervision, (2) having a good working knowledge of conservation planning policy, the NPPH, the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), and data collection techniques.

**Expectations** for the course are that the participants reach the proficiency level of 4 - Apply Independently - can perform independently unless special problems are encountered.

**Course Parts:**

- **Part 1** (Modules 1 - 5) provides the background and framework for conservation planning. It can be taken by computer over the Internet or with stand alone disks in a self-paced format, or taught in the classroom, if desired.
- **Part 2** (Modules 6 - 8) is the hands-on field application of the planning process. It includes classroom and field exercises.
- **Part 3** (Module 9) is the individual application of the conservation planning process utilizing the information learned in Parts 1 and 2. Part 3 is to be completed at the participant's work location with the assistance of a coach and the participant's supervisor.

### **Module Descriptions:**

- **Module 1 - How NRCS Will Do Business** - Sets the stage for the course by providing a synopsis of the history of NRCS and the conservation partnership, and describes how we will do business in the conservation planning arena.
- **Module 2 - Planning Policy and Guidance** - Provides highlights of conservation planning and related policy, as well as information on programs and how they relate to the planning process.
- **Module 3 - Key Elements of Conservation Planning** - Covers the key elements of conservation planning and an introduction to the three-phase, nine-step planning process.
- **Module 4 - Conservation Planning Environment** - Covers the conservation planning environment, including the components and relationships of the natural resources, cultural resources, economic considerations, social considerations, and policy issues.
- **Module 5 - Resource Management Systems** - Covers resource management systems (RMS) and the tools used to develop RMSs.
- **Module 6 - Phase I of the Planning Process** - Provides classroom and field experience in carrying out conservation planning steps 1 through 4 - collection and analysis.
- **Module 7 - Phase II of the Planning Process** - Provides classroom and field experience in carrying out conservation planning steps 5 through 7 - decision support.
- **Module 8 - Phase III of the Planning Process** - Provides classroom and field experience in carrying out conservation planning steps 8 and 9 - application and evaluation.

- **Module 9 - Conservation Planning** - Allows the participants to put the information they learned to practical use by developing a plan, evaluating a plan, and revising a plan.